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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 10 October 1991, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mrs. EUFEMIO

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

COOPERATION WITH SPECIALIZED AGENCIES, THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND AND OTHER UNITED NATIONS ORGANS (agenda item 8)

Mr. KOLOSOV said that the item under discussion was a very significant one for the Committee, which was counting on cooperation with specialized agencies and other United Nations organs in order to carry out its work in the context of mutual efforts for the benefit of children throughout the world. He looked forward to the establishment of a dialogue which would be of assistance both to the members of the Committee and to representatives of the specialized agencies and other bodies.

Mr. HAMMARBERG said that the Committee had to obtain information on relevant activities already being carried out and to find ways of establishing cooperation with other bodies as a two-way process. He hoped that all the agencies and bodies concerned would, in the light of their own mandates, determine how the Convention was relevant to their work and report on what they were already doing in that regard. It would be interesting to know how other bodies envisaged their active participation in the Committee's meetings, not only in regular meetings, but also in subcommittee and pre-sessional meetings, as appropriate.

Mrs. POIRIER (United Nations Children's Fund), referring to article 45 of the Convention, confirmed that UNICEF was prepared to play its role as an active partner of the Committee. It had brought the matter to the attention of its Executive Board, which had agreed that UNICEF should continue to work in the text of inter-agency cooperation to help Governments transform the provisions of the Convention into programmes to protect children and improve their chances of survival and development. UNICEF had thus embarked on a process of using the Convention as the basis for its work on its country programmes of cooperation with Governments. It believed that such country programmes were the best vehicle it could use to support countries in their efforts to translate the ideals of the Convention into legal safeguards and practical programmes benefiting children.

Activities in that area were already under way and the UNICEF Centre in Florence had carried out a study showing how eight countries had used the Convention as a tool to establish a dialogue with Governments on a wide range of issues, including the need to rethink national development policies, the allocation of resources between and within sectors, the need for legal reforms and consequent policy changes to ensure that legislation was applied, the need for children to be spared the worst consequences of armed conflict, the right of children to basic services and the need to develop national and community-level cooperation to monitor children's well-being and the enjoyment of their rights.

Some elements of the country programme process would be of particular interest to the Committee. In the initial stage, the situation of children in a given country was surveyed and major gaps and problems were identified. The Executive Board had authorized UNICEF to help countries establish and develop national mechanisms to gather gender-specific and area-specific data on

children which would be used as a basis for policy development and in order to ensure that the standards set by the Convention and the issues it raised were systematically incorporated in country situation analyses.

The goals for the survival, protection and development of children endorsed by the World Summit for Children gave UNICEF scope for action in assisting countries to implement the goals of the Convention in the areas of child health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation and the problems of children in especially difficult circumstances. Over the next decade, UNICEF would be monitoring progress in achieving such goals and would be helping Governments strengthen their own national capacity to do so. UNICEF had developed a strategy for monitoring such progress on the basis of specific indicators. A note on that strategy, which had been made available to the Committee, described the UNICEF approach and clearly showed how the goals of the Summit and the articles of the Convention were related. While UNICEF did not have responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Convention, it considered that its efforts to monitor progress in achieving the goals of the Summit for Children would be of value to the Committee, as they would reflect what States were doing on aspects of children's rights. States had been requested by the General Assembly to produce reports on the follow-up to the Summit. UNICEF was playing a facilitating role and had developed guidelines for those reports. It would be happy to share with the Committee those guidelines, the note on monitoring and the reports by States as they became available.

UNICEF would also be very willing to share information on its country programmes, but, in order to avoid the risk of providing too much material, it suggested that the Committee should look selectively at certain documents, such as the country programme recommendation, the annual State of the World's Children report, the annual report of the Executive Director, the report of the Executive Board and the list of Executive Board documentation. UNICEF also prepared special studies on selected themes. Recent studies had related to children in the front line and children and the environment and UNICEF would be happy to share them with the Committee.

Three other elements should be highlighted. First, UNICEF was planning to support information and education campaigns to promote knowledge and awareness of the rights of the child, with specific efforts being made to inform children and young people. Secondly, UNICEF would continue to play a role in training in order to ensure that Governments, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, as well as its own staff, were familiar with the provisions of the Convention and could act to ensure that their programmes had a positive influence on progress on the implementation of the Convention. Thirdly, UNICEF was prepared to support the organization of informal consultations and field visits in regional venues which might bring the Committee closer to the situation of children in different parts of the world. In all those areas, UNICEF's cooperation with other United Nations agencies would be systematically pursued.

As a United Nations agency, UNICEF would use its contacts and relationships with its counterparts to advocate the rights of the child. At the same time, its status as a United Nations agency and the intergovernmental nature of its governing body made it necessary to ensure that its activities

and those of other agencies was complemented by those of the non-governmental sector. Such an approach was crucial for the implementation of the Convention and for its monitoring at the national level. UNICEF was therefore ready fully to assist non-governmental organization partners in playing their complementary role.

Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI drew attention to the important work UNICEF was carrying out in disseminating information in cooperation with other bodies in order to ensure that individual countries understood and adopted the measures required to implement that the Convention. He also referred to the fundamental nature of official participation, including through Ministries of Education, and to the need to ensure that children were aware of their rights. The participation of organizations such as trade unions had to be encouraged and it was essential for men to play a role in guaranteeing respect for the rights of the child. With regard to informal meetings, it was in the Committee's interest to cooperate with national bodies, including non-governmental organizations, in ensuring the implementation of the Convention. He suggested that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee might be requested to take part, in cooperation with representatives of UNICEF, in the preparations for the seminar on the rights of the child to be held in Latin America in 1992.

Mr. HAMMARBERG emphasized the need to combine and integrate activities under the Convention and the action being taken by UNICEF. Reporting guidelines had to be coordinated and matters relating to information would require further discussion. He suggested that a meeting should be held at the Committee's next session to focus on questions such as information activities and technical advice and assistance. Consideration should also be given to the way in which the Committee should transmit requests for technical advice or assistance under article 45 (b) of the Convention.

Mrs. SANTOS PAIS said that she was pleased to note the importance attached to the need for information campaigns where children themselves were regarded as the population to whom such information was addressed. One of the purposes of such action was to enable children to participate more actively in the implementation of the Convention and to understand the role of children in society. It had also been recognized that documents should be made available to strengthen the capacity of those concerned at the national and community levels to develop their own ways of implementing the Convention and promoting the rights of the child.

She would like to know the agencies' views concerning the possibility of participation in a follow-up system, particularly where a programme of advisory assistance had been established. The Committee had to have enough information on country situations in order to know what kind of assistance or advice would be appropriate for certain States. At the same time, the Committee had to obtain some feedback from the provision of such assistance and that could be accomplished through local offices of the specialized agencies.

She took note of the emphasis that had been placed on the need for an inter-active approach by which individual agencies would work together to define their own programmes in the light of the Convention and with a view to

avoiding duplication. In that connection, she recognized that it might be important not only to have several dialogues between agencies, but also to carry out an analysis of the various activities undertaken by the different bodies.

With regard to the question of regional meetings, she suggested that the Chairman or Mgr. Bambaren Gastelumendi might consider the possibility of holding informal consultations in Latin America.

Mrs. BELEMBAOGO said that one of the important activities being carried out in her country with the cooperation of UNICEF was the dissemination of information on the Convention to adults and, in particular, to children in schools and UNICEF clubs. However, care must be taken not to leave out other categories of children who should also be informed about the rights of the child, particularly children outside the school environment. She would like to know whether UNICEF had developed a way of reaching those children and helping them obtain information of particular concern to them.

Mr. LOMBARDO (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the most important link between the Committee and UNHCR was the existence of 7 or 8 million refugee children.

The Committee and UNHCR also had a legal link, which was referred to in article 22 of the Convention. However, the link was not confined to article 22, since other articles also referred to refugee children.

His organization's activities had two objectives: first, international protection and, secondly, the provision of assistance.

The most pressing problem was connected with children seeking refugee status. There was also the general problem of the physical safety of refugee children in camps. In addition, mention should be made of military attacks on refugee camps and the forced drafting of children into armies.

It should be noted that there were about 100 UNHCR offices throughout the world that were concerned with the protection of refugee children. However, the problem of refugee children was not only one of protection, but also concerned their health and education. In that connection, his organization was able to provide the Committee with relevant information, since it was working actively in the field. In 1986, UNHCR had established a working group, which had adopted a set of guidelines in 1988 and had distributed it to all UNHCR offices. Those guidelines would provide the Committee with information on UNHCR's activities in the field.

He drew attention to a recent decision by the UNHCR Executive Committee to create the post of coordinator for the question of refugee children who would carefully follow the problem. It would be useful if the Committee and the coordinator could hold a meeting in the future.

The Committee should go beyond what had already been done. In his opinion, it should establish a group of United Nations agencies at the subcommittee level. If the Committee decided that the contributions of specialized agencies could be made only in plenary meetings, the result would

be a repetition of what was already contained in other documents. It would be essential for that kind of contribution to be made informally, before regular sessions began. In that connection, the Committee should inform the various agencies in advance of the problems it intended to discuss so that they would be able to collect as much relevant information as possible.

In conclusion, he said that UNHCR intended to produce a paper in which it would consider the implications of the various articles of the Convention for refugee children.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.